

An Examination of Political Patronage and Maladministration on State-Owned Entities with Specific Reference to South African Airways: A Literature Study

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Abstract

South Africa is one of the states across the globe that is rattled with corruption and maladministration in multiple state institutions. The high rates of corruption within the government were alarming with the local, provincial, and national levels of governance such that multiple measures and task teams were established to combat this discourse. However, this has in recent years seen the spike in corruption now overlapping the State-Owned Entities (SoEs) and not so much in governmental administration. Political elites have used their influence to penetrate the state's entities to either loot their resources, cause nepotism, or harvest tenders in a corrupt manner. Thus, political patronage has allowed the occupation of these entities due to relations at the party level which escalates to business relations. Thus, cadre deployment of less skilled individuals based on political affiliations has led to corruption and maladministration of most state entities such as South Africa Airways (SAA). Through relying on qualitative methods, specifically existing literature and various official documents which describes the effects of political patronage and maladministration on SoEs with specific reference to SAA, this paper reveals that political patronage has contributed to maladministration of SoEs. Thus, due to political patronage and maladministration SAA has failed to be an epitome of effectiveness in discharging its legislative duties.

Keywords: political patronage, maladministration, State-Owned Entities, and South Africa Airways

1. Introduction

State-owned enterprises (SoEs) are vital economic strategic organizations that are set up to facilitate governments' income which is also useful to cover states' debts and reduce the tax burden of citizens (Fourie, 2014). These SoEs which are legal government entities must play a strategic role in revenue collection and economic development. Society, assist with infrastructural development. According to Fourie (2013), SoEs work hand in hand with governments to reach economic growth goal(s) and service delivery. Moreover, they assist in reducing a country's tax burden on citizens and tax-paying stakeholders. Therefore, the inability of SoEs to effectively discharge their duties is part of the main challenges in the South African government is faced with in terms of economic and fiscal terms.

The main challenge of the inability of SoEs to effectively discharge their duties is associated with corruption driven by senior managers within these organizations/ entities as well others mainly senior members of the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Corruption is expanding within state entities, looting is taking its toll on the organizations, political elites are gaining momentum to gain access to these entities, and they are mismanaging them to the ground (Olver, 2018). Amongst the main sources of corruption within the SoEs is political patronage. BaracsKay (2009) explains that political patronage can be understood as appointing or hiring someone in the same political party to a governmental post as a result of partisan loyalty and the means to get political favors either in the same entity or other organizations. Through using existing literature and document analysis as data collection techniques, the paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge by edifying to the vast literature on the levels of maladministration and the concept of patronage. Although there is vast existing literature on the impact of

patronage and its contribution towards corruption and alternately towards maladministration within the different levels of government. However, this knowledge presented does not encapsulate nor does it address the literature gap on patronage being a contributor to the maladministration at SoEs with specific reference SAA. The significance of this work lies on its objective which is to describe the effects of political patronage and maladministration on SoEs with specific reference to SAA. In addition, this work attempts to reveal how political patronage and maladministration has led to the failure of SAA to be an epitome of effectiveness in discharging its legislative duties.

1.1 A Brief Overview on South African Airways

SAA is one of the entities that should play a strategic role in the economic sector, yet they have become some of the biggest expenditures of the government and they are also crumbling (Fourie, 2013). As a result, they are liabilities instead of meaningful assets (Fourie, 2013). The SAA is one of the SoEs within the landscape of South Africa after being established in the 1930s and beginning its operations on the 1st of February 1934, by then SAA had over 30 destinations across the world (McCormack, 1979).

In the 2015 financial year, SAA was serving over 842 destinations across the world (SAA, 2015). The 2015 report, therefore, shows that SAA has always played a strategic role in the economy and social globalization of the state by transporting people nationally, continentally, and internationally. While doing that it has provided infrastructural and economic growth nationwide, regionally, and internationally (Fourie, 2013).

In a study of the analysis of air transport and its economy, Ishutkina and Hansman (2011) provide evidence on how SAA is the gateway to SA tourism and as a mode of transport for the international arena. It provides transportation for the import and export industry. Moreover, the state can allow investors to invest in the entity, which assists by generating capital for the government. The last recorded turnover of this entity i. In the 2016/17 financial year SAA had recorded a turnover of R30,7 billion Rand including the three years prior to this financial year.

However, *Businesstech* (2020); *DailyMarveric*, (2019), and *African News Agency* (2019) have reported on how this entity has refused to submit its financial reports to parliament.

Due to political patronage, Ministers in charge of SoEs can appoint party loyalists as board members and high-ranking decision-making executives in SoEs. As such, the minister of public enterprises is expected to appoint a board that will serve in the executive position of the SAA ordinarily since the ruling party is the ANC. The minister of public enterprises who is a member of the ANC will appoint loyalists of the ANC to serve on the board of the SAA. In addition, the legislature and the executive are dominated by the ANC members, and it hinders accountability as the legislature has the responsibility to hold the executive accountable as required by the constitution (RSA, 1996).

Yet, this is not done thoroughly as party loyalism comes first, and this opens a door for the growing discourse of political patronage. Masuku and Jili, (2019) assert that most cabinet ministers will be from the internal forces of the ANC, and this depicts organizational loyalty amongst the party members. While on the other hand, this shows that in return they could share business opportunities arising from government offices and create political favors for each other. What is evident from the above-mentioned statement is that the collapse of most state entities is at the hands of political deployments as they are political deployments without any merit (Masuku and Jili, 2019). In essence, political appointments further perpetuate corruption and lack of accountability because political elites utilize their political power to manipulate the system (Oliver, 2018).

This can be noted from several entities of government such as Eskom, SABC, and Post-office, they are either closing certain branches or retrenching staff then Eskom with the talks of privatizing it (*Businesstech*, 2020). All these can be linked to corruption and the arising of patronage that is driven by greeting and manipulating the governmental systems for their gain (Qhobosheane, 2018).

Omarjee (2019) has asserted how political interference in SoEs motivates the lack of accountability. This means that the appointment of the executive board of the SAA may be politically motivated, and this will hinder the entity's accountability to the parliament and the public. Omarjee (2019) further asserts how having to report to the minister of public enterprises who is the one that appointed them, makes the chain of command and reporting not properly followed. It must therefore be noted that one of the functions of the legislature, is to hold the executive accountable and ensure transparency as enforced by the constitution (RSA, 1996).

Yet, the legislature being dominated by ANC members as a majority-holding party inhibits accountability and transparency while allowing members of the legislature representing the latter mentioned political party to undermine their constitutional and legislative responsibilities (Klug, 2019). In other words, ANC parliamentarians

often neglect their roles of holding the executive to account and this also affects the accountability of those who are administrative heads of SoEs.

As such corruption brews in the systems and increases, the chances of mismanagement of funds extend the chain of political patronage. SoEs have been under attack from corruption, mismanagement of funds, and irregular expenditure for several years (Tickle, 2018). SAA has not been pardoned from this misfortune, having been at the center of corruption for years and political elites have been the leading appointment criteria for public servants. The recent events that have transpired highlighting that SAA is going for business rescue is a clear indication that corruption, maladministration, and irregular spending have brought this entity to its knees. Olver (2018) asserts that ANC members are loyal, and this loyalty might be having no boundaries, hence it is easy for the members to create patriotic networks and loot state entities such as SAA.

Ordinarily, the ruling party rewards their supporters within the organization and expands their support in the hope to retain office in the next elections and having alliances within the party to ensure that they finish their term in office (Makoa, 2008). For instance, Gumede (2019) argued that the appointment of a member of the ANC in the executive position of the SAA in return for tenders that will be coming out at the SAA is corruption that is limiting the dream of a better South Africa.

2. Literature Review on Maladministration vs Political Patronage

Scholars have in recent years documented political patronage, particularly at governmental levels or institutions (Oliver, 2018), but this concept has now grown and spread to state-owned institutions which have insufficient literature. Therefore, the paper at hand fills in the gaps that are missing in the literature. Oliver (2018) has documented the patronage in the Nelson Mandela Bay area, the patriotic networks in the area have bred a cancerous network of politically connected individuals who specialize in looting state entities. Similarly, Driscoll (2018) has also documented how political competition has drastically increased in the presence of patriotic networks within societies, agreeing with Oliver (2018) about the cancerous spread of patronage in government.

Similarly, South Africa being a multi-party state it was only a matter of time till this competition started to be visible and politicians used their power and influence to get ahead of others (Makinda, 1996; Jolobe, 2014). Ndaba (2021) and Twala (2014) concurred with Makinda (1996) and Jolobe (2014) concerning South Africa being a multiparty society, as well as how having divisions within the party perpetuates patronage alliances. In addition, these politicians use their influence to get ahead in politics hence forming and expanding their political network (Tshishonga, 2014).

Driscoll (2018) agreed with Tickle (2018) and then documented how the local government provides more jobs than any other level of government making it the hotspot to grow patriotic networks as politicians look for opportunities to loot. Hence when it comes to deploying, only trusted and politically connected individuals will be given the posts that control most of the state interests such as the SAA (Tshishonga, 2014). Panizza, Peters, and Ramos Larraburu, (2019) argued that this is done so to ensure that they get to own all the strategic areas of the governments that receive more money.

Since the local government is the one that is close to society, it is tasked with providing individuals with public services and therefore receives more cash injection from the government (2018 & Tickle, 2018). Hence at this level of government, jobs are being handed out for political favors, and corruption is seen as normal. Similarly, this is also what has been transpiring within the state entities, with political elites applying their power to gain control and appoint their candidates hence it is easy for corruption to arise, and this leads to maladministration (Tickle, 2018).

Fraser *et al.*, (2006) and Baum *et al.*, (2008) agree that political patronage is intertwined with the capital structure of the state. Utilizing the state of Malaysia, they depicted there is a relationship between the capital structure and political patronage, especially within the underdeveloped or currently developing states (Fraser *et al.*, 2006; Baum *et al.*, 2008). Hence, these patriotic networks are mainly found in structures that have economic and capital capacity. Similarly, Mello and Spektor (2018) have shown that developing democracies particularly multiparty democracies of developing and underdeveloped states are under the claws of patronage and patriotic networks.

Driscoll (2018) further sets out how political economy, especially in developing states, is one of the root sources of patriotic networks as argued by Lodge (1998); Oliver (2018); and Mamogale (2017). In essence, the role of patronage is to improve politically connected individuals' economic backgrounds, especially in underdeveloped and economically struggling states (Driscoll, 2018).

Jiang and Zhang (2020) in their study have alluded to how patriotic networks are mainly between a group of a few individuals who are using their political networks and ties to enjoy state benefits. This also depicts that patronage

is not only limited to underdeveloped states yet even in states such as China that are well developed but there are also still these web-like structures of patronage that intend to loot and crumble state entities. Moreover, democracies that have been ruled by one dominant party over a long period have shielded the idea of accountability and transparency (Ndaba,2021 & Sangkaew,2021).

Ndaba (2021) similarly argued that the members of these political parties mostly no longer serve the society but turn the table into a self-serving government which also poses the question of whether the regime is still classified as democratic or autocratic (Jiang and Zhang, 2020). To depict and explain the idea of self-serving leadership, Panizza *et al.*, (2019) and Jian and Zhang (2020) single out that roles, skills, and trust are the key points in the development of patronage. The role that is carried out by each patriot within their respective positions and skills which they all have acquired in political activism and how they can use that skills to benefit themselves (Twala, 2014; Combs and Keller, 2010).

Over and above this, is the concept of trust among each other. This is an essential concept/factor as corruption is hoovering upon this process so in executing political patronage, patriots need to be able to trust one another and work efficiently (Panizza *et al.*, 2019). As they trust one another, they can begin corrupt activity without fear hence at the governmental level maladministration has been a huge discourse over the years (Combs and Keller, 2010). Now, this discourse has also spread to the SoEs hence it is facing a financial crisis.

While the paper acknowledges that there is vast scholarship on the impact of patronage and its contribution towards maladministration in SoEs. For instance, as previously alluded that scholars such as Cai and Li (2006) and Katemena (2020) have documented SoEs as being the center of corruption activities within Chinese and Zambian states respectively. Similarly, scholars such as Driscoll (2018) have also alluded to this patronage leading to maladministration within the levels of government while focusing specifically on the Nelson Mandela metro. Essentially, there is vast existing literature on the impact of patronage and its contribution towards corruption and alternately towards maladministration of these entities. Yet, this knowledge presented does not encapsulate nor does it address the gap of patronage being a contributor to the maladministration at the SAA.

3. Patronage as a Conceptual Framework

We use political patronage as a conceptual framework. This concept refers to “the power to support, and control appointments of individuals to an office” (Kenny, 2017); Quaresima, 2019; Pelletier, 2019); Pierskalla & Sacks, 2020). This means that political elites use their power to dictate both political and administrative appointments. The practice of political patronage originally occurred during the presidential tenure of Andrew Jackson in the United States of America. During his tenure, he was awarding those in society and his government/ administration with positions that will create loyalty within his party. In addition, he sought to appoint and rotate staff instead of creating a permanent bureaucratic system in which civil servants hold their position as property. From the works of Panizza *et al.*, (2018) patronage occurs through political leaders using their influence on sway opportunities for their preferred candidates. Similarly, Panizza *et al.*, (2018) did a study of the administrations of Argentina and Uruguay and found that the administration of Mauricio Macri belonging to the Republican proposal party used his political power to deploy cadres from his party to occupy strategic sectors of government. Furthermore,

Panizza *et al.*, (2018) asserted that in Uruguay during the presidential term of Tabaré Ramón Vázquez Rosas of the Socialist Party also deployed members of the latter party to serve in public service. Furthermore, a study by Olver (2018) found that the ANC used its political power to deploy its members to occupy administrative posts at the Nelson Mandela Metro Municipality.

Similarly, Panizza *et al.*, (2018) agree with Jiang and Zhang, (2020) that political elites such as Mauricio Macri and Tabaré Ramón Vázquez Rosas used their power to gain business opportunities that arose from public offices occupied by their appointees. We adopt political patronage as our analytical framework, drawing insights from Ndaba (2021) and Tswala (2014), who contend that individuals are appointed to state entities based on personal interests rather than merit or qualifications. This practice, known as "cadre deployment," involves placing political party members in executive roles to further governmental objectives at different levels of the state. Sithomola (2019:72) highlights that this practice poses substantial challenges by promoting corruption and the misuse of power, primarily benefiting loyal political figures within the ruling party.

4. Methodological Approaches

4.1 Research Design

The researchers opted for a case study research design because of its capability to thoroughly describe, compare, evaluate, and comprehend various aspects of a specific research problem. Case study research design involves an in-depth and detailed examination of a single instance or phenomenon. It focuses on understanding the

complexities and dynamics of a specific case within its real-life context. Therefore, it was chosen specifically for its effectiveness in providing a detailed analysis of a particular case study. Therefore, this design was useful in describing how political patronage has contributed to maladministration focusing specifically on SAA.

4.2 Research Methodology

The researchers employed qualitative research methods to investigate the impact of political patronage and maladministration on SoEs, focusing specifically on SAA. According to Bhandari (2020), qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to achieve a thorough understanding of an idea or theory. Therefore, the researchers relied on qualitative data to gain deep insights and scholarly perspectives on the issues surrounding political patronage and maladministration within SAA. This approach allowed them to systematically analyze existing texts and documents related to patronage and maladministration in SoEs in South Africa, particularly focusing on SAA.

4.3 Data Collection Techniques

The researchers utilized document analysis as a method of data collection. Document analysis is a qualitative research approach designed to systematically gather, assess, and interpret documents that are pertinent to the research topic. This method involves scrutinizing a range of document types, including texts, reports, policies, books, journal articles, and other written materials. It was chosen because it allows for the examination of readily accessible documents such as books, journal articles, official reports, and other relevant sources related to topics such as SAA, SoEs, maladministration, and patronage.

4.4 Key Words and Search Engines

The authors used the key words such as “Political patronage”, “maladministration in State-Owned Entities”, “Political patronage in South Africa Airways” to search for data in multiple data bases and search engines such as google scholar and Sabinet. The search was done with due consideration of the relevance of the documents through screening materials by title, abstract and full text.

4.5 Sampling Procedure

The researchers used purposive sampling to source data. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate and selective approach used by researchers to identify and include relevant sources of literature based on specific criteria aligned with their research objectives. Thus, the researcher purposively selected materials which are aligned to political patronage and maladministration in the context of SoEs in South Africa, specifically focusing on SAA. Materials chosen were published between the years from 1979 to 2024.

4.6 Data Analysis

The researchers employed thematic data analysis for this work. Thematic data analysis is a method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within qualitative data. It involves systematically organizing and interpreting data, often textual, to uncover underlying themes or patterns of similar meaning. The researchers identified patterns and themes in the data through looking for similarities and differences across the data sourced. The following key themes emerged out the data:

- Executive Appointments, Cadre Deployment, Job Appointments
- Corruption and Contract Awards
- Policy Directives and Inefficiency
- Instability
- Financial Mismanagement and Governance Failures.

The following sections presents key results from the existing literature used for this work.

5. Key Results on Political Patronage and Maladministration in SAA

The existing literature on patronage within South African Airways (SAA) illustrates several critical themes and patterns regarding its impact on maladministration within SOEs:

- **Executive Appointments, Cadre Deployment, Job Appointments:** Political patronage has influenced the appointment of executives and staff within SAA, often prioritizing political connections over qualifications. This practice has resulted in ineffective management and hindered the airline's operational efficiency and profitability.
- **Corruption and Contract Awards:** Allegations of corruption have plagued SAA, exemplified by instances such as former CEO Ngqula's alleged personal use of airline resources and preferential treatment in contract awards to associates.

- **Policy Directives and Inefficiency:** Political interference has led to the implementation of policies at SAA that prioritize political agendas over organizational efficiency. For example, the imposition of affirmative action policies under pressure from politically appointed boards has affected staffing decisions regardless of operational merit.

- **Instability:** SAA has experienced significant leadership instability, with frequent turnovers in both corporate and board leadership positions. This instability has contributed to a lack of strategic direction and operational consistency.

- **Financial Mismanagement and Governance Failures:** Financial mismanagement at SAA includes improper financial controls, unsustainable spending practices, and inadequate budgetary oversight. Weak corporate governance practices, including insufficient board and executive oversight, have exacerbated these challenges.

The pervasive influence of political patronage across the executive, legislative, and SOE sectors has hindered accountability and transparency. This network has shielded SOEs like SAA from effective governance practices, perpetuating a cycle of inefficiency and mismanagement. The following section focuses on discussion of results on political patronage and maladministration in SAA.

6. A Discussion on Political Patronage and Maladministration in SAA

It is widely recognized that leadership is crucial within institutions, particularly in the case of SoEs. The achievement of these enterprises' goals depends heavily on the competence and effectiveness of their leaders. As Sithomola (2019:72) points out, the success or failure of SoEs ultimately rests on the capabilities of those in leadership roles. Regrettably, South Africa is grappling with a leadership crisis, evident in the underperformance of its SoEs (Sithomola 2019:72). The leadership crises in SoEs such as SAA has led to maladministration. Maladministration on the other hand is due to political patronage. This means that lack of competence and effectiveness in the leadership of SAA is partly to be blamed on political patronage because there has been a culture of political deployment by political elites. This culture of political deployment is based on self-driven interests by political elites as they ensure that they deploy politically affiliated individuals into strategic sectors of the economy to ensure control over them. Thus, most of these patriotic networks start at the local level of government then eventually grow to the national levels and further spill to the SoEs. This is why at various government levels it is easier for these transactions to take place as they are on a person-to-person level. As such SoEs like SAA are not functioning effectively due to inadequate leadership and governance. The challenges faced by SoEs stem from failures in corporate governance, which include insufficient managerial accountability, a lack of transparency, excessive politicization or political interference, and unclear mandates and objectives (Links and Haimbodi, 2011; Corrigan, 2014; OECD, 2015).

To this end, amongst the primary factors contributing to inefficiency in SoEs is the interference of politicians who prioritize their political agendas (Kgarose, 2023). Sithomola (2019:72) labels this as "political patronage and interference". This phenomenon involves the use of SoEs for "cadre deployment", where members of a political party are appointed to executive positions to advance government agendas across various state levels. This practice poses a significant challenge as it fosters corruption and misuse of power, primarily benefiting loyal political figures within the ruling party (Sithomola, 2019). Thus, key obstacles to the efficiency of SoEs in South Africa include corruption, inadequate governance practices, and unwarranted political interference (Qobo, 2018). Hence according to Sithomola (2019), ineffective leadership has caused numerous SoEs including SAA to face significant challenges including mismanagement, a lack of accountability, inefficiencies in productivity, disregard for legal principles, and a persistent reliance on financial bailouts.

Thus, SAA has entered into business rescue for several times primarily due to government bailouts and guarantees it has received (Khumalo, 2019). The financial difficulties confronting SAA stemmed from issues such as alleged financial mismanagement, unstable leadership, accusations of corruption, and broader challenges within the global airline industry (Khumalo, 2019). Consequently, SAA was at some point burdened with approximately R12.7 billion in debt (Magubane, 2019). The financial woes of SAA are partly blamed on political patronage. Hence, Ndaba (2021) and Tswala (2014) documented that self-serving individuals are being deployed to state entities. Such individuals loot the entity such as SAA for self-gain and economic emancipation for themselves or their patronage networks (Driscoll, 2018; Mello and Spektor, 2018). As Oqubay (2024) puts it, the management crisis at SAA was a significant factor contributing to its poor performance and a lack of strategic direction. SAA experienced frequent turnover in both corporate and board leadership. From 1998 to 2021, the airline saw more than 12 CEOs and 12 board chairpersons appointed, each with an average tenure of less than two years (Oqubay, 2024). The company has also been plagued by allegations of corruption, as highlighted in South Africa's state capture report in recent years (Oqubay, 2024).

Political interference has historically led to the appointment of ineffective managers at SAA, preventing the airline from achieving operational efficiency and profitability (Ssamula, 2014). Hence, Tickle (2018) and Panizza *et al.*, (2019) are of the view patronage as a strategic means for politicians to ensure that they gain favors from those that are in the same political party as them. Furthermore, this is also to ensure that they access the resources of the state. The reason why their relations must start on a personal level is that they will perform corrupt activities and they need to trust one another. Hence, political patronage is the foundation of corruption and maladministration at various government levels. Political patronage is thus a cause of maladministration as well as corrupt activities in institutions such as SAA. For instance, McKune (2015) reported that former CEO Ngqula treated the airline as his personal domain. It was reported that he provided retention bonuses to his friends, sponsored golf and tennis events to facilitate travel with them, and awarded jet fuel contracts to companies in which he had a personal stake (McKune, 2015). This is in line with the position by Panizza *et al.*, (2018), that patronage occurs through political leaders using their influence to sway opportunities for their preferred candidates.

Patronage is the foundation of corruption particularly in governments organizations. Oliver (2018) and Driscoll (2018) agree that political patronage has a huge impact on the day-to-day running of governmental offices. According to Maqutu (2015), under pressure from the politically appointed SAA Board, one of SAA's former CEOs Viljoen was compelled to implement a black political agenda, advocating for "Affirmative Action" policies that systematically replaced white employees with black ones at SAA. Thus, political leaders used their influence to sway opportunities for their preferred candidates (Panizza *et al.*, 2018). As such, political interference persisted, causing ongoing instability that prevented the airline from achieving profitability (Maqutu, 2015). The SAA Board prioritized meeting "Affirmative Action" goals over operational efficiency, leading to frequent conflicts with former CEO Viljoen and hindering his operational strategies. Ultimately, these challenges led Viljoen to depart in 2004 (Birns, 2009). What should be underscore here is that political interference is amongst the causes of SAA's woes. As a result of patronage SAA incurred frequent conflicts between the board and the CEO as well as operational inefficiencies.

There are scholars who view SAA as some of the victims of the young and inexperienced democracies such as South Africa whereby the political elites are only looking to enrich themselves and not necessarily work for the nation. This is observed Mello and Spektor (2018) who argue that developing democracies particularly multiparty democracies of developing and underdeveloped states are under the claws of patronage and patriotic networks.

Sangkaew (2021) blames this on the dominance of the ANC as they were able to position themselves comfortably over the years and enjoy the benefits of running state offices without any hindrance from any opposition, bearing in mind that at some point the ruling party had a two-thirds majority. This meant that the ruling party had the power to amend the constitution without any veto from the opposition parties and also deploy their people into strategic economic positions such as the SAA while serving themselves (Jiang and Zhang, 2020). Due its dominance from 1994 until most recently after the 2024 general elections, both the Executive and Legislative arms of government have predominantly been occupied by ANC membership. It is unsurprising that Parliament has faced criticism for its lack of proactive measures in addressing issues of corruption, maladministration, and financial instability within SoEs like SAA and Eskom (Madonsela, 2019). This is mainly due to the expanded network of political patronage amongst the leadership within the Executive, Legislature and SoEs which are legislatively obliged to work hand in glove to ensure efficiency of these entities. This is line with the view that democracies that have been ruled by one dominant party over a long period have shielded the idea of accountability and transparency (Ndaba, 2021 & Sangkaew, 2021). Hence Motswaledi and Maseng (2024) have concluded that, the decline of SoEs is attributed to factors such as corruption and maladministration, is exacerbated by the prevalence of political patronage. The following section concludes the article.

7. Conclusion

The themes and patterns emerging from the existing material on patronage in respect of its effects on maladministration in SoEs, specifically SAA show us that, patronage has resulted in (a) Executive Appointments, Cadre Deployment, Job Appointments (b) Corruption and Contract Awards, (b) Policy Directives and Inefficiency, (d) Instability and (e) financial mismanagement and governance failures

Political patronage over SAA has led to cadre deployment, job appointments and/or executive appointments. For instance, through political interference in SAA, there has historically occurred appointment of ineffective managers and this has prevented the airline from achieving operational efficiency and profitability.

SAA has also been plagued by allegations of corruption, as highlighted in South Africa's state capture report in recent years. At some point in time, it was also former CEO Ngqula treated the airline as his personal domain. It was reported that he provided retention bonuses to his friends, sponsored golf and tennis events to facilitate travel

with them, and awarded jet fuel contracts to companies in which he had a personal stake. Thus, patronage has led to political and administrative leaders using their influence to sway opportunities for their preferred people.

Due to pressure from the politically appointed SAA Board, one of SAA's former CEOs Viljoen was compelled to implement a black political agenda, advocating for "Affirmative Action" policies that systematically replaced white employees with black ones at SAA. This policy directives were not anchored on efficiency of the organization rather on policy directives and priorities of the board. Thus, political influence has also affected strategic decision-making, with decisions sometimes being made not in the best interest of the airline's sustainability but rather to appease political interests or agendas.

SAA has continued facing management crisis which was and still is a significant factor which contributed to its poor performance and a lack of strategic direction. SAA experienced frequent turnover in both corporate and board leadership. From 1998 to 2021, the airline saw more than 12 CEOs and 12 board chairpersons appointed, each with an average tenure of less than two years

SAA has struggled with financial mismanagement, including issues such as improper financial controls, unsustainable spending, and inadequate budgetary oversight. In addition, there has been weak corporate governance practices, including inadequate board, executive and legislative oversight and accountability, have been highlighted as contributing factors to the airline's governance challenges. This is mainly due to the expanded network of political patronage amongst the leadership within the Executive, Legislature and SoEs which are legislatively obliged to work hand in glove to ensure efficiency of these entities. This is in line with the view that democracies that have been ruled by one dominant party over a long period have shielded the idea of accountability and transparency

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Authors contributions

Sample: Thabang Richard Motswaledi & Jonathan Oshupeng Maseng (PhD) were responsible for study design and revising. The authors were both responsible for data collection and drafting the manuscript. Both authors revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. In this paragraph, also explain any special agreements concerning authorship, such as if authors contributed equally to the study.

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